

Pesticide

info

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PESTICIDES



California Department of Pesticide Regulation

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BRANCHES: Worker Health and Safety

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Pesticide Registration

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Regulating pesticides: Who, why and how?

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) protects human health and the environment by regulating pesticide sales and use and fostering reduced-risk pest management. DPR's strict oversight includes product evaluation and registration, environmental monitoring, residue testing of fresh produce, and local use enforcement through the county agricultural commissioners.

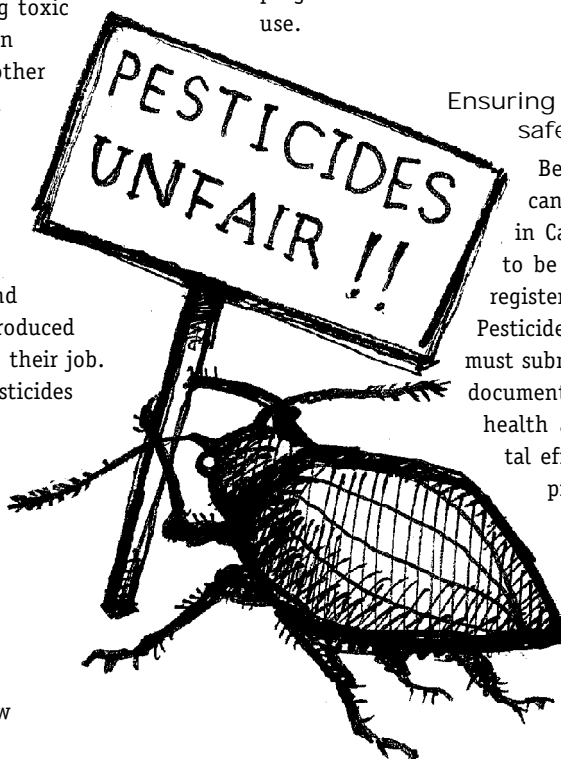
Pesticides are unique among toxic substances. They are not an unwanted byproduct of another process, for example, of an industrial operation or an automobile engine. Pesticides are industrial chemicals produced specifically for their toxicity to a target pest, and they must be purposely introduced into the environment to do their job. Therefore, regulation of pesticides does not focus solely on assessing toxicity but also on managing risk by controlling exposure. The effects – beneficial, harmful or benign – of pesticides or any substance are dependent on several factors. The most important is exposure – how much and how often.

That is why state and federal pesticide programs focus not on eliminating all pesticides but on protecting people and the environment from harmful exposures. If a pesticide cannot be used safely, then its use will be banned. But the initial step is to impose strict controls on use. DPR protects public health and the environment with the nation's most rigorous and comprehensive program to evaluate and control pesticide use.

Ensuring pesticide safety

Before a pesticide can be sold or used in California, it has to be evaluated and registered by DPR. Pesticide manufacturers must submit studies that document the potential health and environmental effects of their products.

DPR scientists – including toxicologists, biologists, entomologists, plant physiologists and chemists –



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evaluate the data to confirm the studies were properly conducted and that the chemicals can be used safely in California. If manufacturers cannot demonstrate that their products can be used safely to protect workers, consumers and their children, and others who may be exposed to pesticides, DPR will not allow the pesticide to be used in California.

In evaluating pesticides, DPR scientists work closely with other state agencies, including the departments of Fish and Game, and Health Services, as well as agencies within Cal/EPA, including the State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Toxic Substances Control, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, and Air Resources Board.

Protecting people

DPR scientists evaluate potential hazards of pesticides in homes and workplaces, reviewing studies on active and inert ingredients in pesticide products and on application methodologies. In addition, the Department conducts field studies each year to monitor worker exposure to pesticides. These studies help develop better methods to evaluate exposure and to prevent overexposure. DPR specialists also provide advice and assistance to medical professionals regarding pesticide illness and treatment. All reported pesticide illnesses are investigated by the county agricultural commissioners. DPR uses this information to evaluate its regulatory program and to fine-tune safety rules.

Environmental protection and reduced-risk pest management

DPR studies how pesticides break down in the environment and their potential to contaminate soil, water and air. This helps answer questions about the impact of these chemicals on human health and the environment and to learn ways to prevent contamination. DPR scientists also use monitoring and other data to evaluate reduced-risk solutions for pest problems. By identifying hazards, preventive planning, and enhancing regulatory controls, DPR encourages development and use of pest control practices that are both environmentally sound and effective.

Enforcing pesticide laws

To ensure compliance with the nation's toughest pesticide laws, California has the largest and best-trained enforcement organization in the nation. DPR oversees licensing and certification of dealers, pest control advisors, pest control businesses and applicators; assumes overall responsibility for pesticide incident investigations; administers the nation's largest state pesticide residue monitoring program; and coordinates pesticide use reporting.

The county agricultural commissioners and their staffs have primary responsibility for local enforcement activities. Training, coordination, supervision, and technical and legal support is provided by DPR staff at headquarters in Sacramento and field offices in Anaheim, Fresno, Ventura, West Sacramento, Bakersfield, and Watsonville.

DPR PROGRAMS ARE DIVIDED AMONG THREE DIVISIONS

The Registration and Health Evaluation Division has three branches: Pesticide Registration, Medical Toxicology, and Worker Health and Safety. The Enforcement and Environmental Monitoring Division is comprised of Pesticide Use Enforcement Branch, Environmental Monitoring Branch, and Pest Management and Licensing Branch. The Division of Administrative Services includes the Audit, Personnel Services, Fiscal Management, and Information Technology Branches.